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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1346
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2650
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI)

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SUBJECT: KYRGYZ AGRICULTURE MINISTER POSITIVE ON FOOD SUPPLY

REF: BISHKEK 593

1. (SBU) Summary: In a September 10 meeting, Kyrgyz Agriculture Minister Nogoyev assured the Ambassador that government officials had taken steps to secure food supplies this winter, but did express concern about the impact of continued electricity cuts. Nogoyev welcomed the extension of two USAID programs that would aid food and livestock production, and expressed interest in an agricultural equipment leasing program. While the Minister's optimism echoes similarly rosy statements from other government officials, the Embassy remains concerned about electricity, food and other shortages that may occur this winter. End summary.

Balancing Optimism and Aid

2. (SBU) During a September 10 introductory meeting with the Ambassador, Kyrgyz Minister of Agriculture Arstanbek Nogoyev provided an optimistic assessment of Kyrgyz preparations for ensuring sufficient food supplies this winter. Pointing to the global increases in wheat and flour prices, Nogoyev emphasized the Kyrgyz government had taken steps to mitigate the impact of these price increases. While stressing that there should be sufficient food available this winter, Nogoyev did express concern about the impact of continued electricity cuts. Therefore, he noted, the Ministry is seeking contingency supplies of diesel fuel, generators and solar-powered batteries. Nogoyev noted to the Ambassador that after independence, rural residents disassembled power lines for scrap, and only later realized how much damage such action caused. Nogoyev said that now these rural farmers are forced to rely on solar batteries. "This was a good learning experience for them," he chuckled.

3. (SBU) The Ambassador and USAID Country Representative informed the Minister of the \$2 million extension of the USAID project focusing on agricultural inputs, private supply chains, technology improvements that would aid staple crops and livestock, and providing additional funds to procure wheat seeds. The Minister expressed appreciation and agreed that experts from both sides would meet to ensure delivery of the right seeds for planting in late September. (Note: Despite the Minister's assurances that food supplies were sufficient for the coming winter, Ministry data indicate that the country is facing over a 40% shortfall in wheat this year. Independent data suggest that there could be a loss in livestock of 30% or more due to lack of animal fodder. End

note.) The Ambassador and USAID Director told the Minister that, in response to his request, USAID has also extended assistance to water user associations in the south to assist in improving irrigation. The Minister also welcomed the possibility of an agricultural equipment leasing program, calling it "ideal; a dream come true."

Comment

¶4. (SBU) Nogoyev's optimism echoes recent statements by government officials downplaying any reference to potential electricity, food or related crises this winter. Despite such public optimism, Embassy is still concerned about possible winter disruptions -- see reftel. USAID and other Embassy offices are seeking additional ways to aid the Kyrgyz through what may be a very tough winter.
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